

September 15, 2008

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia: Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 5350, a bill authorizing the Secretary of Commerce to sell or exchange certain National Ocean and Atmospheric Administration property in the City of Norfolk, Virginia. At the request of the City of Norfolk, I introduced this legislation in February of this year, along with my colleague from Virginia's Second Congressional District, *Thelma Drake*, who also represents part of the City of Norfolk.

Over the last decade, the City of Norfolk has experienced tremendous economic growth. Downtown Norfolk has reemerged as the urban center of the Hampton Roads region through revitalization and new commercial and residential development.

For several decades, NOAA has been an important Federal partner in downtown Norfolk's development. NOAA's Atlantic Marine Operations Center and NOAA's Chesapeake Bay office are both located downtown in an area referred to as the Fort Norfolk district, which is one of the last remaining undeveloped waterfront areas of downtown Norfolk.

Nearly a decade ago, the city recognized the strategic location of the Fort Norfolk district for development and revitalization and the city began discussions about its desire to purchase a parcel of property from NOAA located at 538 Front Street, directly across from NOAA's primary Norfolk facility. NOAA currently uses the property for storage and staff space for the Norfolk field operations office of NOAA's National Geodetic Survey. These discussions stalled when NOAA ascertained that congressional authorization was required to proceed.

H.R. 5350 simply authorizes, but does not require, the Secretary of Commerce to sell or exchange the NOAA property located at 538 Front Street in Norfolk to the City of Norfolk. The bill clearly states that NOAA may only sell or exchange the property if the Secretary of Commerce determines that the conveyance would be in the best interests of the Federal Government. The bill also requires that the property be sold at a value not less than the fair market value, as determined by the Federal Government.

The bill does not delineate or support any particular agreement or contract. The details of any future agreement between NOAA and the City of Norfolk would have to be worked out. This legislation would simply permit that process to move forward, and if a mutually agreeable contract is decided upon, this land sale or exchange would allow Norfolk to continue its tremendous economic growth by developing the land for commercial and residential purposes. The authority granted to the Secretary of Commerce to enter into this agreement with the City of Norfolk will expire 2 years after the date of enactment of H.R. 5350.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the chairwoman of the Fisheries Subcommittee, Ms. *Bordallo*, and the ranking member, Mr.

Brown

, as well as the Natural Resources Committee chairman, Mr.

Rahall

, and ranking member, Mr.

Young

, for getting this bill to the floor.

I urge my colleagues to support this bipartisan legislation that protects both the interests of the Federal Government and the citizens of Norfolk.